

# NORTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Honorable David Narkewicz, Mayor  
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Roni Gold      Kaia Goleman  
Laura Fallon      Lonnie Kaufman  
Dina Levi      Emily Serafy-Cox  
Susan Voss



**John A. Provost, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent

**Camie Lamica, CPA**  
Business Administrator

March 12, 2020

Dear Caregivers:

The World Health Organization has officially declared the coronavirus outbreak to be a pandemic. While there have been no official cases in our area, that is likely to change in the near future. Our School Physician Dr. Johanson has asked me to share the following information with all families:

As we have explained in previous messages we are asking anyone who is concerned they may have had contact with COVID-19 should begin by **calling** their health care provider or insurance helpline and remaining at home until receiving further direction. At this time, most individuals will not be seen in providers' offices because our local physicians need to prioritize caring for more seriously ill patients. COVID-19 has been found to cause mild symptoms in children, similar to a cold, so the focus is on preventing spread to older individuals who are more at risk. For this reason, we will no longer request a doctor's note for students who are absent.

In the days ahead, some members of our learning community may self-quarantine or require isolation. The term isolation is reserved for individuals who have a contagious disease and have been distanced from other people. In contrast, individuals who self-quarantine may NOT have COVID-19. They may be asked to self-quarantine NOT because they have the virus but because they have had potential exposure to the virus.

Several families have asked how the School Lunch Program could continue to support their children's nutritional needs in the event of an extended school closure. We have reached out to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for guidance. Massachusetts has issued statewide emergency feeding waivers. However, **Northampton is not included within the emergency waiver zone at this time.** The waivers have been reserved for districts identified in areas of high food insecurity. Knowing the devastating impact this could have on our families, we

will continue to advocate for permission to operate an emergency feeding site should it become necessary to close the schools.

Social media has spread some misinformation about the health status of members of our learning community. This is referred to as quarantine-bullying. We ask you to help prevent this hurtful behavior by avoiding online discussions of other's personal decisions. You should not assume you understand the reasons for anyone else's decisions.

We continue to communicate with the Northampton Health Department several times a day to ensure we keep our community safe. In addition to canceling large meetings and asking individuals who feel sick to stay home from school, the increased sanitation measures discussed in previous updates continue to be the recommended practices at this time.

Sincerely,

John Provost, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

Lisa Safron, BSN, RN, NCSN  
Interim Director of Health, Safety, and Equity Programs

**For more information on coronavirus, the following websites are available with up-to-date information:**

**The CDC's website: <https://www.cdc.gov>**

**Northampton Public Health website: <https://www.northampton.gov>**